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ABSTRACT

A national survey of all (676) teacher preparation programs in speech communication was conducted during 1976 and 1977. Responses were received from 266 (42%) institutions; of these responses, 219 (34%) were usable. This paper reports the informational and attitudinal responses on the following subjects: the department and the institution; state certification requirements; the professional education sequence; the student teaching experience; the methods course; and the curriculum within the major. Tables of findings are included. (Author/RL)

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THE CURRENT STATUS OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS IN SPEECH COMMUNICATION

William C. Davidson

Abstract: During 1976-77, under the auspices of the Educational Policies Board of the S.C.A., the author conducted a national survey of all teacher preparation programs in speech communication. The survey elicited informational and attitudinal responses about: (1) the department and the institutions; (2) state certification requirements; (3) the professional education sequence; (4) the student teaching experience; (5) the methods course; and (6) the curriculum within the major. Responses were received from 266 (42%) institutions; of these responses, 219 (34%) were useable.

This study, conducted during 1976-77, is the first effort to survey all college level programs (with a major) leading to the certification of secondary teachers of speech communication.[1] The questionnaire contained 153 items (nine pages) and was designed to be as comprehensive as possible; hopefully, it will provide a basis for future comparisons.[2] The central objective was to establish current trends and project future directions. Every attempt was made to develop questions which would provide a comparative base with previous research.[3]

According to information supplied by the State Education Departments, there are 676 programs with majors leading to the certification of secondary teachers of speech communication, although the actual number is somewhat closer to 600.[4] Approximately 45% of the accredited colleges in the United States have a teacher preparation program in speech communication. The survey yielded a 34% (219) return. Addressed to Department Chairpersons, the questionnaire was filled out by those faculty most responsible for the teacher preparation program.

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Department/Faculty/Students

Of the 219 respondents, approximately two-thirds (60%) were from state schools, while the remaining (40%) were from privately supported institutions. Although the name of the department in which the program existed varied considerably, the following four titles were most frequent (85%): Speech and Drama (34%); Communication (20%); Speech Communication (18%); and Speech (13%).[5] The difference in department title (as well as differences in program) reflect the different perceptions of the field today.

Most of the respondents (80%) hold a full time appointment in one of the above departments; one-third (32%) hold the rank of professor and two-thirds (67%) have the Ph.D.

Within the past three years (74-76), the 219 responding institutions graduated 4,285 students with teacher certification in speech communication (more than 1,400 graduates each year). If the responding institutions are any indication, we are graduating approximately 4,300 new teachers each year (and there has been virtually no decline during the past three years). It should be noted, however, that while the number of majors graduating with teacher certification has remained almost the same, the number of majors has increased considerably (See Table I).

TABLE I (Means)

1. Number of undergraduate majors: 74-75 = 96.9; 75-76 = 106.9; 76-77 = 129.
2. Number of undergraduate majors seeking teacher certification: 74-75 = 16.7; 75-76 = 16.3; 76-77 = 18.4.
3. Number of undergraduate majors who graduated: 73-74 = 19.3; 74-75 = 21.4; 75-76 = 28.0.
4. Number of undergraduate majors graduating with teacher certification: 73-74 = 6.5; 74-75 = 6.5; 75-76 = 6.4.

Certification Requirements

Table II presents a summary of current opinions regarding certification requirements.[6]

TABLE II

	Strongly Approve 1	2	No Opinion 3	4	Strongly Disapprove 5
1. There should be separate certification standards for speech and theatre.[7]	39%	19%	13%	15%	12%
2. S.C.A. should become an accrediting agency.[8]	28%	25%	18%	12%	14%
3. The program shall provide for competencies in:					
--speech fundamentals	76%	15%	2%	1%	3%
--personal proficiency in oral communication	69%	23%	3%	2%	2%
--public address	60%	24%	7%	4%	2%
--oral interpretation	53%	27%	13%	3%	3%
--dramatics	43%	25%	14%	9%	6%
--simple speech problems	37%	31%	15%	10%	4%
--dialects and other regionalisms	20%	25%	35%	13%	5%
4. Certification standards recommended by S.C.A. (Speech Teacher, November, 1975) are adequate.	17%	41%	22%	4%	1%

Professional Education Sequence

The average number of semester credits required in the professional education sequence was 24.5. A vast majority (81%) of the respondents felt that these requirements were "very adequate" (35%) or "adequate" (46%). Most institutions require a course in the "Psychology of Education" and in the "Philosophy of Education." Other course requirements in education, except for student teaching, varied considerably. Most institutions (91%) require a

proficiency level (or course requirement) in English, while only 42% have a similar requirement in speech communication.

Student Teaching

More than half (53%) of the respondents reported that the supervision of student teaching was assigned to someone outside of their department. Most (52%) reported that the supervisor was responsible for grading the student teaching experience. However, the majority (51%) also indicated that either "no grade" or "pass-fail" (rather than a letter grade) was the grading system employed. Although most faculty receive a load reduction for student teaching, the formula varied so much than no single pattern dominated. The duration of student teaching also varied (ranging from 1 to 25 weeks); most (57%) reported the following time spans: eight weeks (18%); ten weeks (12%); sixteen weeks (16%); and eighteen weeks (11%). The student credit hours received for student teaching ranged from three credits to twenty-five credits and the mean for all respondents was 8.6 hours. A majority (74%) reported between six to twelve semester credit hours: 24% reported six credit hours; 26% reported eight credit hours; 12% reported ten credit hours; 12% reported twelve credit hours. Most respondents reported that they observed the student teacher three times, spending (on the average) 2.7 hours a week with the supervision of student teaching.

The Methods Course

Most respondents (80%) indicated that a methods course in the teaching of speech communication was required and that it was taught by a faculty member in the speech communication department (88%). Although most respondents indicated that the course also addressed the teaching of theatre, 20% reported that their institutions had a separate methods course for theatre. Typically the methods course is three semester credit hours (58%) and most (75%) found the hours

required to be "adequate." Most instructors (52%) require observation of instruction in the secondary classroom and a third (36%) require the students to teach a unit in the secondary school. Most (51%) of those instructors who do not include a teaching experience in the methods course, noted that they thought it ought to be included. Most institutions (54%) do not require a minimum G.P.A. in the major for students entering the methods course.

One of the more interesting aspects of the survey pertained to the content of the methods course. As noted in the table below, most respondents emphasize: (1) the teaching of public speaking, interpersonal communication, (2) the development of teaching resources, and (3) lesson plans. Beyond these areas, the emphasis varies, although not perhaps as much as previous research has indicated. In sum, our approach to the methods course produces a rather consistent pattern.

TABLE III

	No Emphasis 1	2	Some Emphasis 3	4	Major Emphasis 5
1. Teaching of public speaking	3%	3%	21%	39%	33%
2. Teaching of film	49%	27%	19%	3%	1%
3. Teaching of broadcast media	30%	23%	33%	12%	2%
4. Teaching of interpersonal communication	8%	8%	25%	35%	23%
5. Teaching of drama	11%	15%	28%	26%	21%
6. Teaching of communication theory	15%	16%	43%	19%	7%
7. Teaching of journalism	70%	14%	9%	5%	2%
8. Teaching of oral interpretation	14%	28%	32%	17%	9%
9. Directing media activities	39%	25%	26%	10%	.5%
10. Directing debate & forensics	11%	12%	30%	33%	13%
11. Directing theatre	15%	19%	26%	24%	17%
12. Development of teaching resources (one area)	10%	8%	22%	27%	33%
13. Development of teaching resources (all areas)	8%	14%	26%	27%	24%

TABLE III (Continued

	No Emphasis 1	2	Some Emphasis 3	4	Major Emphasis 5
14. Development of lesson plans	3%	6%	14%	30%	48%
15. History of speech education	24%	40%	23%	9%	3%
16. A philosophy of the field	6%	12%	30%	28%	24%
17. Test construction	8%	17%	37%	28%	9%
18. Criticism of communication behaviors	9%	8%	28%	37%	19%

The Major

Most institutions (52%) require between 31 and 40 semester credit hours in speech communication for the major seeking teacher certification although there is considerable variance. Table IV presents the range of semester credit hour requirements and the percent of institutions which adhere to that requirement.

TABLE IV

Range of Semester Credit Hours	Percent
24 semester hours (or less)	19
25-30 semester hours	23
31-34 semester hours	16
35-40 semester hours	36
42 semester hours (or above)	10

Most respondents (85%) indicated that the course requirements stipulated specific courses (rather than optional requirements which allow for a selection between two or three courses). Those courses required by most institutions (50% or more) include: oral interpretation, argument, and public

address. No other courses are required by 50% or more of the responding institutions.

The survey also sought to establish attitudes toward requiring specific courses. Table V lists those courses which most respondents thought "ought to be required" or "probably should be required."

TABLE V

	Ought To Be Required	Probably Should Be Required	Combined Percent
1. Discussion	65%	26%	91%
2. Interpersonal Communication	64%	26%	90%
3. Drama	62%	19%	81%
4. Argument	59%	27%	86%
5. Public Address	58%	24%	82%
6. Oral Interpretation	58%	24%	82%
7. Directing Debate Activities	52%	32%	84%
8. Persuasion	49%	39%	88%
9. Directing Drama Activities	42%	31%	73%
10. Communication Theory	38%	35%	73%
11. Voice and Articulation	38%	24%	62%
12. Mass Communication	30%	26%	56%
13. Rhetorical Theory	24%	31%	55%
14. Broadcast Media	23%	29%	52%
15. Directing Media Activities	18%	32%	50%

It is noteworthy that the three courses which received the highest level of endorsement are not required at most institutions. If the attitudinal response is considered indicative, we could expect to see course work in discussion and interpersonal (or small group process and human interaction) become a requirement. The likelihood of drama becoming a course requirement will undoubtedly be affected by the acceptance or rejection of drama as a separate (or special) certification area. Obviously, at the present time, most institutions

do not separate these areas. Similarly, the likelihood that a course (or courses) in mass communication would become a requirement for the student seeking teacher certification will be affected by the outcome of current efforts to reshape certification requirements.[9]

FOOTNOTES

[1]This study stemmed from a recommendation of the Memphis Conference of Teacher Educators (1973). Specifically, the Conference requested that the Educational Policies Board "commission a survey of teacher education in speech communication."

[2]A copy of the questionnaire and the response obtained on all items is available from the author.

[3]Several people were involved in the construction of the questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted in 1975 and the instrument was refined further in 1976. Members of the Educational Policies Board (Ron Allen, Robert Kibler, Sharon Ratliffe, and Barbara Lieb-Brilhart) were especially helpful. Studies conducted by Wilds (1918), Ritter (1937), Erickson (1963), Applebaum and Jenson (1973) and Julian (1975) were especially helpful in constructing the questionnaire.

[4]Fifteen percent of the respondents (34) reported that the program did not exist. In addition, the listing used for California is not accurate.

[5]Such variations as "Speech and Theatre," the addition of "Arts" or "Arts and Sciences," and the use of the plural, rather than the singular, were included in the above four categories.

[6]Responses were tabulated on the basis of state (as well as region); consequently, further research could establish a correlation between the state and the attitude of the respondents toward the specific certification standards in that state.

[7]Unfortunately, the statement is vague, for it is not clear whether speech and theatre is perceived as a separate category or two separate categories.

[8]Given the level of support for the idea of accreditation, the association may very well want to consider the possibility of providing such a service.

[9]The S.C.A./A.T.A. Joint Task Force on Teacher Preparation recently (1976) formulated a statement of "Competency Models in Communication and Theatre." That statement sets forth separate competencies for "specialists" at the secondary level in: (1) speech communication (with additional competencies for the forensics specialist), (2) theatre, and (3) mass communication.